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ABSTRACT

The Technical and Further Education (TAFE) National Centre for Research and Development is a national education research and development organization. The center was established in June 1980 as a company limited by guarantee, and its members are the ministers responsible for TAFE in all of Australia's states and territories and in the commonwealth. Fifty percent of the center's funding is provided by the commonwealth government; additional funding can be raised or earned (as from the sale of materials), and the center can apply for research grants. In recent years, the center has been especially successful in raising additional research funds and has formed an external consulting division. Managed by a board of no fewer than 11 but not more than 12 members, the center is involved in the following activities: conducting and commissioning research, publishing research reports and a journal for TAFE teachers and others in the field of technical and further education, developing workshops, holding conferences, running the National Technical and Further Education Clearinghouse, working closely with the Curriculum Projects Steering Group, sitting on advisory committees, and disseminating information through other organizations. (MN)

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TAFE

TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

THE TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

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THE TAFE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Technical and Further Education (TAFE) National Centre for Research and Development Ltd. is located in Adelaide, Australia. It is a national education research and development organisation, formed as a company limited by guarantee, its members being the Ministers responsible for TAFE (representing all States and Territories, and the Commonwealth).

This paper describes the Centre, its history, its administration and its major activities. Further information about the Centre in the form of brochures, wall charts, publication booklets and microfiche for all research projects is also available.

HISTORY OF THE CENTRE

The need for the Centre was first stated in the (Kangan) Report on Technical and Further Education in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 1974):

> (17) An Australian TAFE Technology Centre should be established as a company limited by guarantee for the purposes of adapting technology to vocational education, and of researching, developing and producing learning and other educational aids by itself or through others. The Centre should also serve as the clearing house for relevant research, disseminate information from abroad, commission relevant research, publish a journal, arrange when appropriate for the publication of text books, admit for periods of training administrators and other persons with experience in technical and further education, and arrange such other matters as may be desirable from time to time. Finance should be provided through the Australian Minister for Education in such a way as to make the Centre financially accountable to him, but otherwise the company should operate on business like lines and attempt to break even on production activities. (p. 149)

This need was taken up by the Committee of Inquiry into Education, Training and Employment in the Williams Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 1979):

> The Committee recommends a National Centre for Research and Development in TAFE to be funded jointly by the Commonwealth and States. The Council of the Centre could be appointed by the Australian Education Council. The National Centre would be engaged on projects such as:
>
> (a) the planning and production of teaching materials to be available to all States;
> (b) the analysis of skills required for various occupations, not only in the middle-level and apprentice fields, and the related educational courses needed to train for them, taking into account the time needed to reach appropriate skill levels;
> (c) accreditation;
> (d) classification of courses and nomenclature of awards;
> (e) the use of technological aids in teaching; and
> (f) the development of self-paced learning programs. (p. 332)

The Centre was finally established in June 1980, after the Conference of TAFE Directors and the Chairman of the Technical and Further Education Council (TAFEC) prepared a proposal for the Australian Education Council (AEC) meeting in October 1979. At that meeting a draft charter was accepted which made provision for the review of the Centre after three years. The Centre was created as a company limited by guarantee on 2 September 1981 and it started operations on 2 November 1981.

The vision, enterprise and persistence of TAFE Directors must be applauded. It had taken them seven years (since the release of the Kangan Report) to get the Centre established.

The second milestone in the Centre's development was the review of the Centre which took place during the first few months of 1984. This thorough evaluation made seven far-reaching recommendations to the Company, including "That the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development continue to operate, and on a permanent basis". This, and all other recommendations, were adopted in 1984.

A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE

The Centre's full name is the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development Ltd. It is a South Australian registered company limited by guarantee (what this means is that there is a written agreement between the members of the company, and the company, guaranteeing limited payment by the members where a deficit occurs of liabilities over assets upon winding up of the company).

Therefore, the Centre must comply with all of the regulations of the South Australian Companies Act. The Company members are the State and Territory Ministers responsible for technical and further education, plus the Federal Minister. The Centre's Executive Director acts as Company Secretary at Company Meetings.

Funding is provided by the Commonwealth Government (50%) and the States/Territories (on a per capita basis). Additional funds can also be raised, or earned (e.g. from the sale of materials); and research grants can be obtained, in the same way as any other educational organisation. In recent years the Centre has been especially successful in raising additional research funds, including funds from industry. This has led to the formation of the Centre's External Consulting Division.

MANAGEMENT

The Centre is managed by a Board which consists of not less than eleven nor more than twelve Directors as follows:

- three of the Directors must be persons who are eligible for membership of the Conference of Directors of Technical and Further Education;

- four of the Directors must be persons who are actively engaged in commerce, industry or training, one of whom shall hold office as the Chief Executive Officer of a government training authority, one of whom shall be an employer, and one of whom is nominated by the trade union movement;

- two of the Directors must be persons who are knowledgeable about and have experience in matters concerning Technical and Further Education, one of whom shall hold office as the principal of a college of TAFE within the Commonwealth, and one of whom shall hold office as a TAFE teacher within the Commonwealth;

- the Executive Director of the Centre;

- the Chairman of the relevant federal training council.

The Board meets four times each year. One of these meetings is held outside South Australia. There is one Board sub-committee, the Research and Development Committee, which meets twice each year.

The Board's Research and Development Committee has the following terms of reference:

1. to advise the Board on the research and development projects which should be undertaken by the Centre or commissioned by the Centre;

2. to monitor the Centre's research, but especially the quality and relevance of research which is undertaken.

The composition of the committee is as follows:

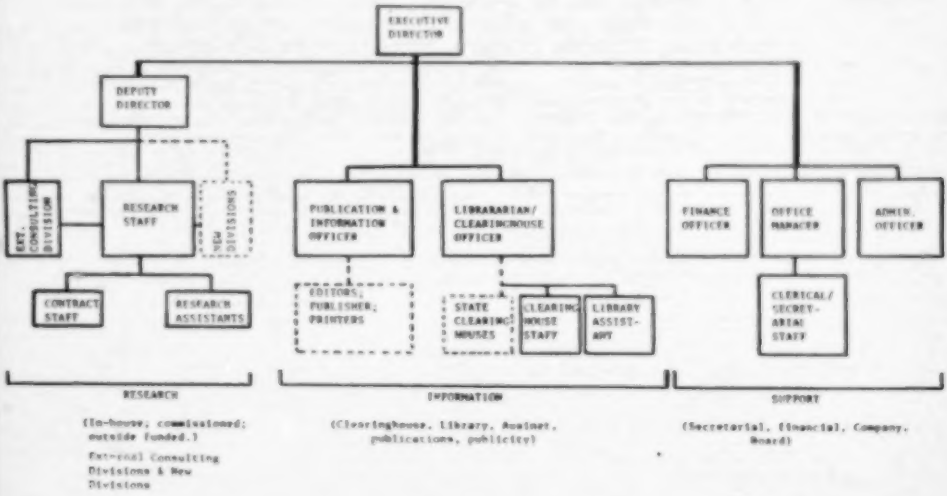
- Executive Director, TAFE National Centre for Research and Development Ltd. (Chairman);
- Deputy Director, TAFE National Centre for Research and Development Ltd. (Executive Officer of Committee);
- Chairman of the Curriculum Projects Steering Group (CPSG);
- Senior member of a State TAFE research branch;
- Senior academic from applied discipline;
- Industrial training representative;
- Industrial representative;
- Member of the Department of Employment, Education and Training;
- A teacher nominated by the Australian TAFE Teachers' Association.

The Schedule of the Board and Research and Development Committee meetings is as follows:

MONTH	MEETING	MAJOR AGENDA ITEMS
March	Board	(a) Visit to a TAFE authority; (b) next year's budget, in detail.
May	Research Committee	(a) Consider broad areas for research; (b) to consider detailed research briefs; (c) to consider seed research proposals.
June	Board	(a) Determine next year's research projects; (b) strategic planning; (c) draft Annual Report.
September	Board	(a) Annual Report; (b) next year's budget in outline (for Company Meeting).
(October/ November	Company Meeting)	
October	Research Committee	To consider next year's research proposals/submissions.
December	Board	(a) Determine next year's research proposals/submissions; (b) redrafted current year's budget in detail.

It will be appreciated that there is some flexibility in the schedule.

Internally, the Centre's management organisation is shown in the following figure:



All staff are appointed to an appropriate level on the South Australian Public Service Board salary scales. However, research and development officers roughly correspond to a university tutor/lecturer, and senior research and development officers roughly correspond to senior lecturers.

AIMS

The Articles of Association list the Company's aims:

(2) To carry out research and development programs to satisfy the needs of persons and authorities responsible for the provision of technical and further education in Australia.

(3) Without limiting the generality of paragraph (2) of this clause, carry out, co-ordinate and stimulate:

(a) research aimed at:

i) analysing the skills required for various occupations;

ii) designing, reviewing and evaluating technical and further education curricula and programs particularly those with national significance;

iii) investigating and preparing reports and recommendations on such topics related to technical and further education as the Company may from time to time direct;

(b) the planning and development of learning materials relevant for the needs of technical and further education;

(c) the evaluation, development and promotion of technological aids in education;

(d) the development of an informed national awareness of technical and further education research and development;

(e) liaison with authorities responsible for education and training within Australia and elsewhere for the purpose of collecting, assessing and disseminating material relating to technical and further education curricula and educational materials;

(f) the development of officers employed by Technical and Further Education Authorities within Australia in matters where the Company has particular expertise.

(4) To operate the facility known as "the National TAFE Clearinghouse".

How these aims are being achieved is described below in the section 'Activities'. Also, a separate colour brochure about how we achieve our aims is available free of charge from the Centre and a brochure summarising the previous year's Annual Report and current Corporate Plan is available.

THE NETWORK

The Centre's network is complex with links to industry, government, TAFE (at college, State and Federal levels) and other research and development groups. Figure 2 summarises the network.

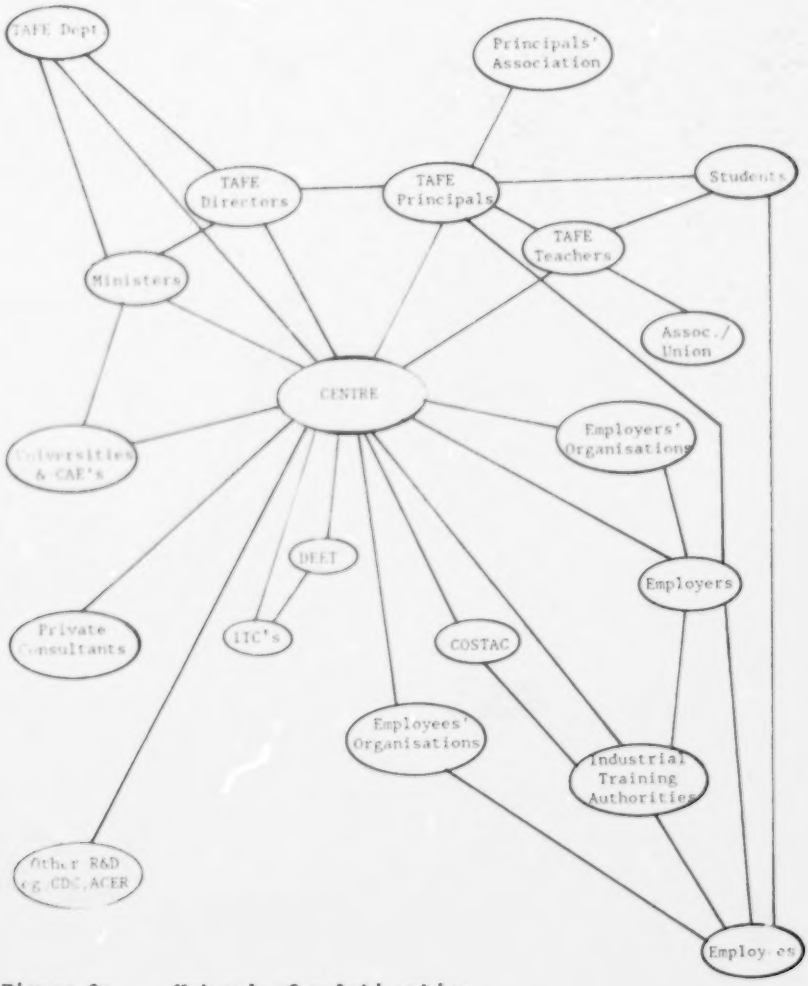


Figure 2: Network of relationships

ACTIVITIES

The Centre achieves its aims by:

- conducting research
- commissioning research
- publishing reports
- publishing a journal
- mounting workshops
- holding conferences
- running the National Clearinghouse
- working closely with the Curriculum Projects Steering Group (CPSG)
- sitting on advisory committees
- disseminating information through other organisations.

Each of these is now described but with special emphasis on conducting and commissioning research, followed by the publishing of reports, because most effort is expended in these areas.

RESEARCH AND REPORTS

Centre research can be conducted by the Centre's own research and development officers, or it can be commissioned. Each year, major grants are awarded to researchers including 'seed money' for pilot projects.

The different main stages involved in project development together with the groups involved at each stage are shown below and each stage is briefly discussed. These processes are followed for the following reasons:

(a) so that there is seen to be reasonable academic objectivity, including external review of our research;

(b) so that all interested people know that there are standard processes which are amenable to public scrutiny;

(c) so that we undertake research and development which our clients (notably TAFE Directors) actually want, the results of which will be useful to them;

(d) so that the Board actually has the responsibility for approval at a very early stage in the development of a project.

Three types of project are identified: in-house; commissioned; and externally funded. Diagramatic representations of each main stage for all three types of project follow. These main stages are:

- conceptual stage
- planning stage
- approval stage
- research critiques and assessment stages
- publication and dissemination stages.

Also, throughout a project there is the need to monitor its progress.

After the diagrams, there is a brief description of these processes.

It should be appreciated that the Centre can (and frequently does) respond quickly for requests to conduct research, especially if the project is funded by another organisation.

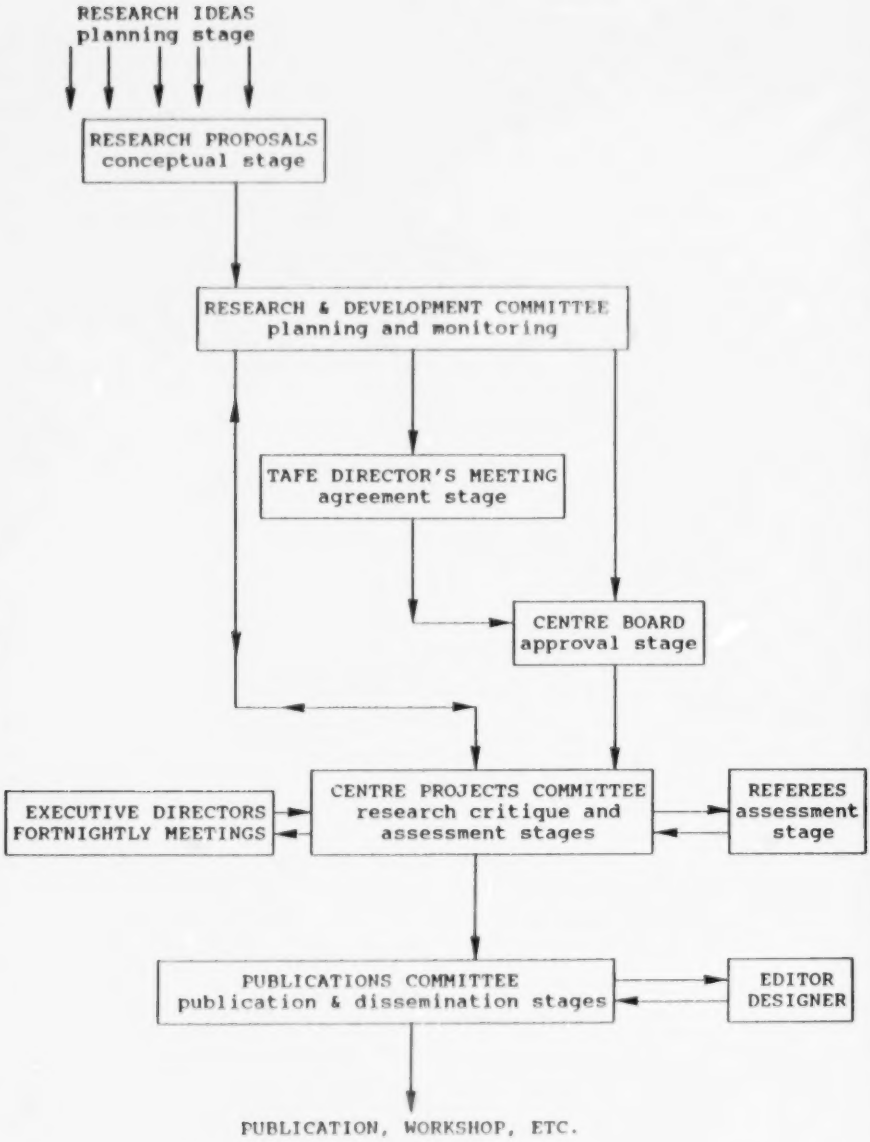


Figure 3: In-house Projects

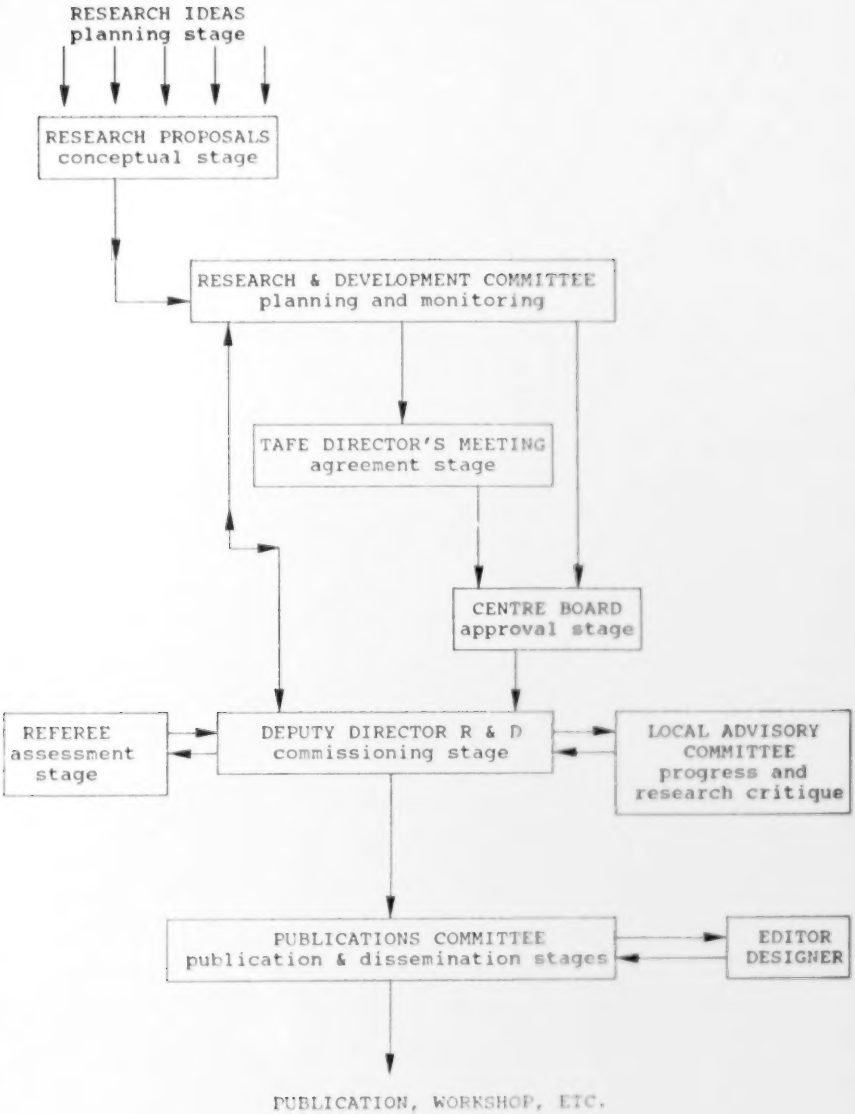


Figure 4: Commissioned Projects

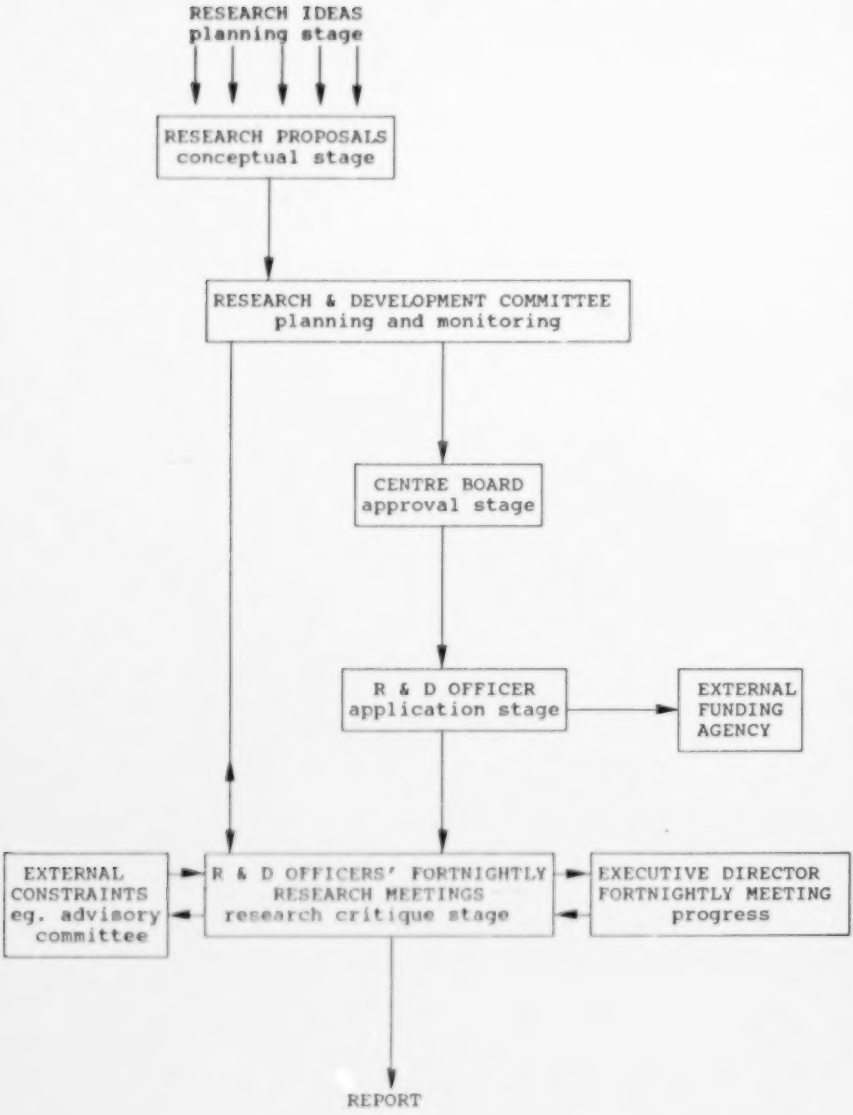


Figure 5: Externally Funded Projects

The timetable for in-house and commissioned projects is as follows:

ACTIVITY	BY WHOM	WHEN
Determining broad areas for research	Input from network & Centre staff	March-April
Network input includes TAFE Directors, Liaison Officers, training authorities, COSTAC	Research Committee recommends	May
	Board determines	June
Research project proposals	TAFE Authorities, Centre, Other researchers	July-September
	Research committee	October
	TAFE Directors	November
	Board	December
Research project detailed briefs	Tenderers, Centre staff	January-March
Board decides who will conduct research (i.e. whether in-house or commissioned)	Research Committee	May
	Board	June
Research and development	Tenderers, Centre Staff	July-June
	Board	At each meeting
Dissemination including workshops	Centre staff and others	During and after the research and development.

Ideas for projects come from the Board, from the Research & Development Committee, from Centre staff, from TAFE Authorities, from the Commonwealth and from the network (e.g. the TAFE Principal's Association, the TAFE Teachers' Association, and so on). A diagram showing this network is shown as Figure 2. Once each year, relevant groups are asked to submit a small number of ideas for consideration. These ideas are discussed by the Research and Development Committee, bearing in mind the need to have a balance of projects. The Research and Development Committee submits the complete list with its recommendations to a TAFE Directors' meeting. The outcome is a short-list of agreed and tentatively budgeted projects. This list is submitted to the Board for its discussion, together with a summary of all submitted projects and notes from the Research and Development Committee. The Board then decides which projects should proceed.

In-house projects are assigned to the appropriate Research and Development Officer (frequently working as a member of a team) who meets fortnightly with the Executive Director and presents occasional papers for internal debate at the regular R & D Officers' research meetings. External consultants are invited to attend these meetings, as appropriate; and one or two referees are paid to comment on the draft report. The final report is then passed to the information section. On publication, a media release is normally distributed.

Commissioned projects are normally administered by the Deputy Director (Research and Development). When a project is commissioned, an agreement showing the timetable, periods of payment, etc., is signed by both parties. A local advisory committee is formed and this is attended from time-to-time by Centre staff.

Externally funded projects are subject to external constraints (e.g. the formation of an advisory, or management, committee) but, as far as possible, follow the in-house process whilst the research is proceeding.

As soon as possible, for all projects, a project profile is written so that the Board, TAFE Directors, etc., have a description of each project. These are written as single sheets, colour coded, and contain the following information:

- project title
- project category
- researcher(s)

- location
- budget
- duration (starting time and anticipated finishing date)
- description of project (main aims, research approach, etc.)
- intended outcomes (eg. publications, a.v.a, conferences etc.).

The profiles are available free of charge on request.

The final reports can be purchased from Nelson Wadsworth, 480 La Trobe Street, Melbourne 3000, and a complete list of publications is available (free of charge) from the publishers. Free microfiche copies of all of our research are available direct from the Centre.

JOURNAL

The journal is produced mainly for TAFE teachers. Other readers are research and development officers, college principals, lecturers in training institutions, etc. It is published twice each year.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops lasting for one to four days are conducted each year in major centres. Frequently, they form part of the dissemination phase of a project. Sometimes, the research techniques used in a project will form the basis of a workshop; on other occasions, the product or results of a project will be the focus of discussion. Workshops are available free of charge to TAFE employees.

CONFERENCES

Conferences are planned by the Centre to discuss pertinent research and development issues in TAFE. Invariably a publication arises out of a conference.

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE

Aim 4 of the Articles of Association deals with the National TAFE Clearinghouse, which had been established before the Centre was formed and which is separately funded. The twice-yearly Clearinghouse report, Initiatives in Technical and Further Education compiled in close liaison with State Clearinghouse Officers, is one of the Centre's greatest successes. Further Clearinghouse publications dealing with computer software and with curriculum materials are being planned.

Another important Centre publication is TAFE Projects in Progress, which lists all new projects being conducted by TAFE Authorities and the Centre. A separate brochure about the Clearinghouse is available free of charge.

CURRICULUM PROJECTS STEERING GROUP (CPSG)

National Core Curriculum (NCC) refers to a TAFE course provided for a single area across Australia. A core of knowledge and skills is identified for all States and then a local component is added. The first project was started some years ago in Queensland and now there are examples across the whole range of TAFE curricula, including electrical trades, automotive mechanics, accounting, timber technology, and sheetmetal. The TAFE National Centre works closely with the CPSG and runs an annual workshop for newly appointed National Curriculum Project chairpersons.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Many members of staff sit on the advisory committees of external bodies. These are listed in the Annual Report.

DISSEMINATING INFORMATION THROUGH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Centre has excellent relationships with its network and regularly publishes information through other organisations, journals and newsletters. For example, most issues of the "Australian TAFE Teacher" contain material submitted by the Centre.

The Centre administers annual travel awards made by Ansett Airlines and Australian Airlines. Details of this can be obtained from the Centre.

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Further information about the Centre can be obtained by writing to:

The Administrative Assistant
TAFE National Centre for Research & Development Ltd.
296 Payneham Road
Payneham
South Australia 5070.
Phone (08) 42 7905

Free information includes:

- brochures about the Centre and the National TAFE Clearinghouse
- Annual Report
- Corporate Plan
- publications brochure
- project profiles
- microfiche of completed research.

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